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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-sixth year

Letter dated 3 June 1991 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i.
of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the French arms control and disarmament plan recently put forward by the President of the French Republic (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the text of this letter and the French arms control and disarmament plan to all the Members of the Organization as an official document of the forty-sixth regular session of the United Nations General Assembly, under item 60 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jean-Marc ROCHEREAU DE LA SABLIERE
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* A/46/50.

READEX FICHE

ANNEX

Arms control and disarmament plan

The spread of increasingly costly and destructive weapons systems is engendering growing risks for the world. Inequality, injustice and disparities in power bring in their wake threats, the arms race, and conflicts of all kinds. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction gives a global dimension to this risk. The whole world, South and North alike, has a vital interest in halting this race and in checking this dangerous, ruinous proliferation. This is a matter which concerns us all.

Our aims are clear. Chemical weapons must be eliminated. Bacteriological weapons must not be produced. Existing nuclear arsenals must be reduced to their lowest level consistent with the maintenance of deterrence. Non-dissemination of nuclear weapons remains an imperative. Conversely, the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes is justified. The dissemination of ballistic technologies must be strictly controlled in so far as they may be used for aggressive ends. On the other hand, there is no reason to prevent cooperation in space for civilian and scientific purposes.

With regard to so-called conventional weapons, the goal should be to safeguard or to institute a balance of power in each region at a level consistent with the right of all States to security. Arms exports must be strictly controlled and conducted in a manner compatible with this action. France has already endorsed these goals and stands ready to lend its support for any effort to improve existing arrangements, or for any new international or multilateral commitment based on them. It has already begun to give thought to this issue with its parners in the community.

Global arms control and disarmament requires action at three levels: with respect to each individual weapons category, and at the regional and world-wide levels.

I. Objectives regarding individual weapons categories

Each weapons category requires specific treatment, proceeding in stages if necessary. France is constantly concerned to adapt its own regulations, and in order to achieve clearly-defined goals applicable to all it proposes that practical measures be taken at an early opportunity, on a sector-by-sector basis:

1. A ban on, and elimination of, chemical weapons: The entire international community, meeting in Paris in January 1989, acknowledged the need to complete work as soon as possible on the convention banning chemical weapons. France has proposed the convening of a meeting of the Special Committee on Chemical Weapons in Geneva at ministerial level to conclude the talks before the end of the year. It calls on all States to become original parties to the convention.

2. A ban on bacteriological weapons: at the Review Conference of the 1972 Global Prohibition Treaty, in September of this year, France will propose the addition of a protocol on verification.

3. Nuclear disarmament remains an essential goal. France supports the efforts of the two major Powers to reduce their nuclear arsenals. It confirms that it will participate in the process as soon as the conditions laid down by it in 1983 have been fulfilled.

At the same time, it is important to avoid proliferation of nuclear weapons beyond the five existing nuclear Powers.

France, which already applies all of the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, has decided in principle to sign it and hopes that all States will accede to it.

4. The Missile Technology Control Regime, which enables those now in possession of missile know-how to limit the risks of ballistic proliferation, should be only an intermediate step towards a more general agreement - one that is geographically broader, better controlled and universally applicable. This agreement would lay down rules conducive to civilian cooperation in space, while eliminating any danger of diversion of technology for the purpose of developing a military ballistic capability. Here again, the aim should be to create a situation in which all States wishing to gain access to space for development purposes may cooperate within a framework that guarantees security.

France further recommends the development of confidence-building measures in space, in the form of a "code of conduct" for civilian and military satellites.

5. Conventional weapons. Conventional arms exports must not work against the region-by-region search for a balance of power at the lowest possible level consistent with each State's right to security.

The five permanent members of the Security Council - which happen to be the major producers of conventional weapons - are about to start a round of consultations in Paris in the coming weeks aimed at working out rules for restraint. The process could then be broadened at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly, with a view to establishing an international arms sales register to be kept by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Particular attention will be paid in these discussions to sales of conventional weapons through parallel markets.

The members of the European Community have already begun consultations with a view to making proposals on this subject.

II. Regional goals

The example of Europe is encouraging. Europeans have graduated from cold war to peaceful coexistence, and now to cooperation within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. They have adopted and applied security and confidence-building measures. They have signed the first conventional disarmament agreement. This experience cannot be transposed as such. But it does show that the arms race is not inevitable. This approach could serve as an inspiration for other initiatives in other regions.

We call for regional security arrangements based on the following rules:

(a) Only after a start has been made on solving conflicts can this process get under way and thus begin to build confidence.

(b) Adoption by parties concerned of regional security and confidence-building measures. Information is the prime condition of confidence. Transparency and confidence-building measures, i.e. mutual disclosure of capabilities and force strengths, and of movements of armed forces, reduces the sense of threat and paves the way for disarmament proper. This requires a framework (which could be a regional organization) and means of inspection (on-site and satellite). France would be willing to disclose information available to it to regional agencies responsible for ensuring transparency. It would favour the provision of such means of observation - particularly space-based ones - as may be available to Europe and the United Nations, to such regional agencies.

(c) Efforts must be made to move towards a balance of regional power, through national decisions and through negotiations. Arms export policies must not run counter to this goal. Once such an equilibrium has been achieved, its level should progressively be lowered through negotiations, with provision being made for means of control.

(d) Strict regional application of specific category regimes laid down for ABC weapons and ballistic missiles. It is for this reason that, at the initiative of France, United Nations Security Council resolution 687 on the cease-fire in the Gulf reiterated that the specific restrictions placed on Iraq in respect of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, together with ballistic missiles, formed part of a broader approach aimed at establishing in the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and all missiles together with a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons. This goal should be pursued in other parts of the world.

III.

The United Nations is now in a position to play to the full the role conferred upon it under its Charter. France considers that it is therefore incumbent on the Security Council to lend its backing to and, where necessary, harmonize such disarmament and non-proliferation policies. The Council should encourage the signature of agreements on individual categories of arms, together with regional and multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. On the basis of the agreements reached, it could develop general rules and thus maintain a world-wide watch.

This presupposes that the members of the Security Council, and first and foremost its permanent members, will set an example in this regard.